

SELECT WINES OF ROMANIA

At a Glance

Six of Romania's top wineries have banded together as Select Wines of Romania to market their wines in the United States. Together, the wineries have nearly 15,000 acres under vine with grapes indigenous to Romania, such as Feteasca Neagra, and international varieties.

Carl Reh Winery – Crama Oprisor

Area Under Vine: 622 acres

Region: Oltenia

Winemaker: Veronica Gheorghiu

Reds: Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Feteasca Neagra, Pinot Noir

Whites: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Muscat Ottonel, Feteasca Regala

Website: www.crama-oprisor.ro

Cramele Recas

Area under Vine: 1,750 acres

Region: Banat

Winemaker: Hartley Smithers

Reds: Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Feteasca Neagra, Pinot Noir.

Whites: Pinot Grigio, Feteasca Regala, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling

Website: www.recaswine.ro

Domeniul Coroanei Segarcea

Area under Vine: 750 acres

Region: Segarcea

Winemaker: Anghel Family in consultation with French oenologist Ghislaine Guiraud of Montpellier University.

Reds: Merlot, Pinor Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Feteasca Neagra

Whites: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay

Website: www.domeniulcoroanei.ro

Halewood Romania

Area under Vine: 780 acres

Region: Dealu Mare, Murfatlar, Sebes Transylvania

Winemaker: Lorena Deaconu, Fiorenzo Rista

Reds: Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Feteasca Neagra, Pinot Noir

Whites: Pinot Grigio, Feteasca Regala, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Traminer, Tamaioasa Romaneasca

Website: www.halewood.com.ro/

Murfatlar

Area under Vine: 8,200 acres

Region: Murfatlar

Winemaker: Alexandru Canariov

Reds: Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé, Feteasca Neagra

Whites: Chardonnay, Late Harvest Chardonnay

Website: www.murfatlar.com

Senator

Area under Vine: 2,250 acres

Regions: Husi, Vrancea, Banat-Tirol, Insuratei

Winemaker: David Lockley

White Cuvee: Sauvignon Blanc, Feteasca Regala, Riesling

Red Cuvee: Merlot, Cabernet, Feteasca Neagra

Website: www.senatorwine.ro

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Romania's Climate and Terroir

The main geographical features of Romania, which also temper the continental climate of the country, are the Black Sea, the Danube and the height of the Carpathian Mountains. The mountain range occupies almost half the country, rising to about 2,500 meters and enclosing the Transylvanian plateau, situated at about 400 meters above sea level. In the south, the Danube (Dunarea) flows through a sandy plain, turning north towards its delta and isolating the province of Dobrogea with its opening to the Black Sea.

The continental climate, with hot summers and cold winters, moderated by such local factors as those mentioned above, the soils, basically stony and well-drained around the Carpathians, but more alluvial and sandy in the coastal area and, last but not least, the exposure to sun light and "warmth" of the Romanian soul are the key factors determining the quality of wines produced in what many would consider a God-blessed wine country.

(Source: www.premiumromania.com/regions/index.html)

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SELECT WINES OF ROMANIA

About Romania

Romania is located at the crossroads of Central and Southeastern Europe, north of the Balkan Peninsula, on the Lower Danube, within and outside the Carpathian arch, bordering on the Black Sea.

Romania shares a border with Hungary and Serbia to the west, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the northeast, and Bulgaria to the south.

At 92,043 sq miles, Romania is the ninth largest country of the European Union by area, and has the seventh largest population of the European Union with 21.5 million people. Its capital and largest city is Bucharest, the sixth largest city in the EU with about two million people.

The Kingdom of Romania emerged when the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were united under Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza in 1859. Independence from the Ottoman Empire was declared on May 9, 1877, and was internationally recognized the following year. At the end of World War I, Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia united with the Kingdom of Romania. Greater Romania emerged into an era of progression and prosperity that would continue until World War II. By the end of the war, many northeastern areas of Romania's territories were occupied by the Soviet Union, and Romania forcibly became a socialist republic and a member of the Warsaw Pact.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the 1989 Revolution, Romania started a series of political and economic reforms. After a decade of post-revolution economic problems, Romania made economic reforms and joined the European Union on January 1, 2007, and NATO on March 29, 2004.

Throughout Romania's history, its wine industry has been a mainstay. While the industry took a step back during the Communist era when the wineries were nationalized, its wineries were privatized in the late 1990s. This brought in a new era of investment in modern winemaking and today the country's wineries make wines at the highest level of European Union standards, with quality and labeling specifications, protection of origins (PDOs), geographic indications (PGIs) and a deep respect for the environment. Romanian wines regularly receive awards at the most prestigious European competitions.

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SELECT WINES OF ROMANIA

Romania's Wine History

Wine was first introduced to Romania nearly 4,000 years ago in Dacia (present-day Romania) by the Greeks, who arrived from the Black Sea. According to legend, Dionysus – the Thracian god of wine – was born in what is now Romania and Plato declared its vineyards to be the best in the world. Its wines became so famous that in the first century BC, the king ordered that all the vineyards be destroyed to discourage possible invaders. Of course, his people weren't so easily deterred and soon new vineyards flourished.

Due to the hot dry summers, the location proved to be successful and the grape vineyards thrived. Since the medieval times, wine has been the traditional alcoholic beverage of the Romanians.

Later, during the medieval ages, Saxons immigrated to Romania, bringing along with them different variations of Germanic grape vines. By the 1800s, most of these grape vines were replaced by grapes from Western Europe.

In the 1880s, phylloxera (a pale yellow sap-sucking insect that attacks the roots of vines) arrived in Romania from North America. The phylloxera wiped out a majority of Europe's vineyards, including those in Romania. Eventually, many of the Romanian vines were replaced by those imported from France and other foreign nations, such as Merlot, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Fortunately, Romania's classic indigenous grapes such as Feteasca Negra, Babeasca Neagra, Feteasca Alba and Feteasca Regala survived and today thrive and make for outstanding wines.

In 2003, Romania was the twelfth largest wine producing country in the world.

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SELECT WINES OF ROMANIA

Indigenous Romanian Grapes

Babeasca Neagra

Babeasca Neagra is an old native variety cultivated mostly in southern Moldova. Most Babeasca Neagra wines are made for current consumption. Some very high-quality wines, however, are made in the Nicoresti district in Moldova.

Busuioaca de Bohotin

This grape grows in a tiny area of Moldova region of Romania. The wine has a golden rusty color, distinct from any other wine. Its flavor is original, resembling honeysuckle and ripe peaches, with a perfect harmony of sugar, alcohol and acidity. The refreshing sweet taste sometimes has a barely perceptible almond-like aroma.

Feteasca Alba

Translated as "White Maiden" in English, Feteasca Alba is an old Romanian variety grown especially in Moldova and Transylvania. Wines are either dry or semidry, with a balanced alcohol content (11.5-12%), acidity and sugar. With more than 56,000 acres cultivated in these vines, it is the most popular Romanian grape variety.

Feteasca Neagra

Known as the "Black Maiden" in English, Feteasca Neagra is an old native variety, grown in several areas in Moldova and Muntenia. These grapes produce dry, semidry or sweet wines, with an alcohol content of 12-12.5%, a deep red color with ruby shades, and a blackcurrant flavor that becomes richer and smoother with aging. Excellent Feteasca Neagra wines are obtained in the Valea Calugareasca, Urlati, Tohani and Cotesti districts.

Feteasca Regala

Feteasca Regala, or "Royal Maiden" in English, is an old variety from Transylvania. Wines are dry, fresh, have high acidity and a distinguished flavor. This variety is relatively new and was created in Mures County before the Second World War. It is a combination between Feteasca Alba and Grasa de Cotnari.

Sarba

Indigenous to Romania, this pre-phyloxera grape makes white wines characterized by delicate flavors of peaches and apricots. The taste offers floral aromas, with hints of basil, which are typical of this variety.

Tamaioasa Romaneasca

Tamaioasa Romaneasca translates in English to "Romanian Incensed Maiden." This variety produces high quality aromatized wines. The color of the wine is golden-yellow, with a floral and honey aroma, a rich taste and 12-12.5 % alcohol by content. With age, this wine gets better and better.

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SELECT WINES OF ROMANIA

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Select Wines of Romania Launches U.S. Marketing Campaign

NEW YORK, New York – Six wineries from Romania have banded together to launch a dynamic marketing campaign to penetrate the U.S. market with a selection of wines produced in one of the world's oldest wine regions.

Located in southeastern Europe where the Blue Danube River meets the Black Sea, Romania lies on the same latitude as Bordeaux, Piemonte and other great winemaking regions.

Branded as "Select Wines of Romania," the winery group includes Cramele Recas, Halewood Romania, Senator, Domeniul Coroanei Segarcea, Murfatlar and Carl Reh – Crama Oprisor. Together, the wineries have nearly 15,000 acres under vine with grapes indigenous to Romania and international varieties.

"Romania has been making wines since 2,000 B.C. and now it is among the main European countries producing world class wines," noted Ioan Stefan, Executive Director of APEV Romania, the national association of wine growers and exporters. "We believe that the U.S. market will be excited by the discovery of interesting and unusual varietals such as Feteasca Neagra."

Feteasca Neagra, a red wine known for its intense ruby color and strong personality, is available from each of the six vineyards, along with a selection of Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and other varietals and blends.

The three-year marketing campaign is being financed by funds from the European Union and Romania. The European Union is known as an important wine producer in the world, with 65% of world production, 45% of the world's wine regions, 57% of global consumption and 70% of exports.

The European Union, including Romania, offers for export a diverse range of wines that are popular with consumers around the world and are strictly regulated from the vineyard to the consumer with an emphasis on quality and food safety. The European Union has specific winemaking methods that focus on terroir, with acknowledged health and nutrition benefits, in addition to quality and labeling standards, protection of designation of origin (PDOs), geographic indications (PGIs) and a deep respect for the environment.

The marketing campaign launched this month with a series of small group tastings in New York City with media and the trade. Select Wines of Romania will have also an exhibit (booth #212) at the

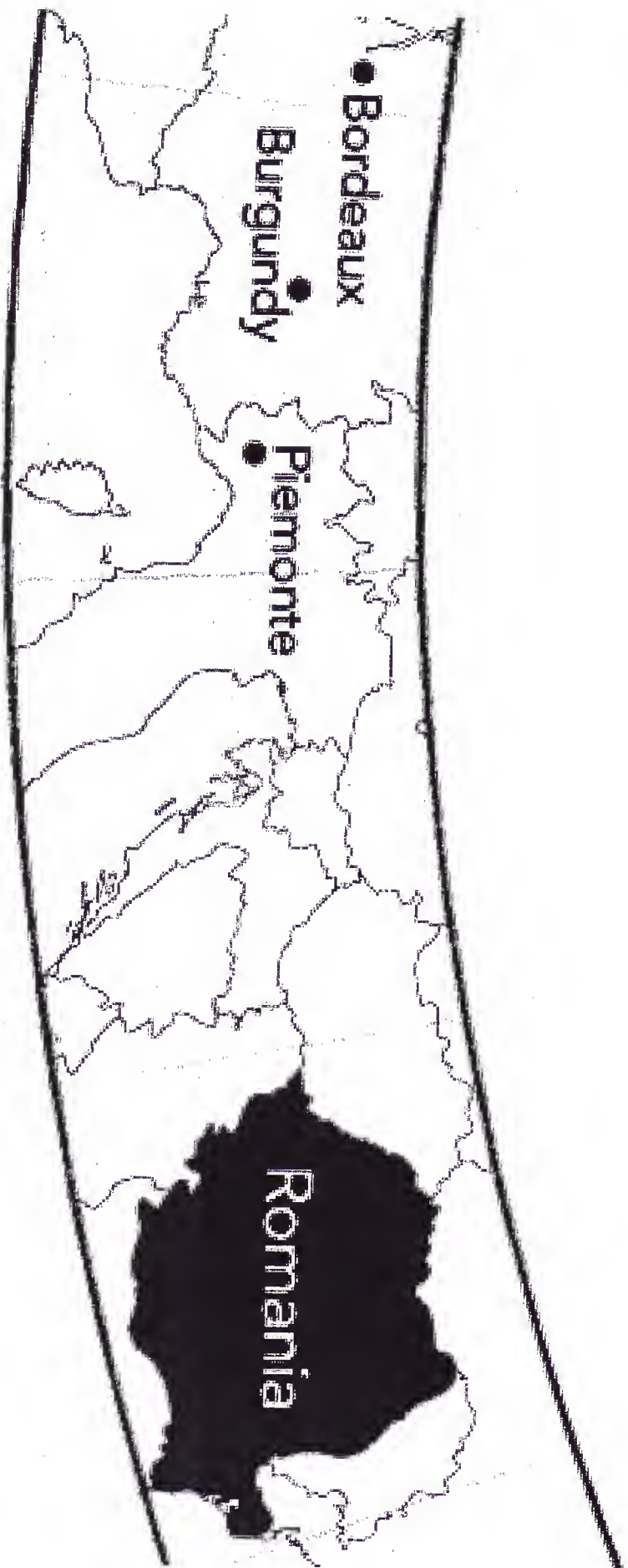
Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) Convention and Exposition in Orlando in April and will enter more than two dozen wines in the wine tasting competition. A wine tasting for importers is slated for April 14 in New York City. A new website, collateral materials, advertising, e-marketing, trade fairs and events for importers and distributors are also in the works.

"Romanian wines are virtually unknown to the U.S. market today and are relatively hard to find," noted Andrew Levine, President of Development Counsellors International, the New York-based marketing firm hired by APEV-Romania. "Our goal is to expose Romania's top wines to the American wine trade and consumer."

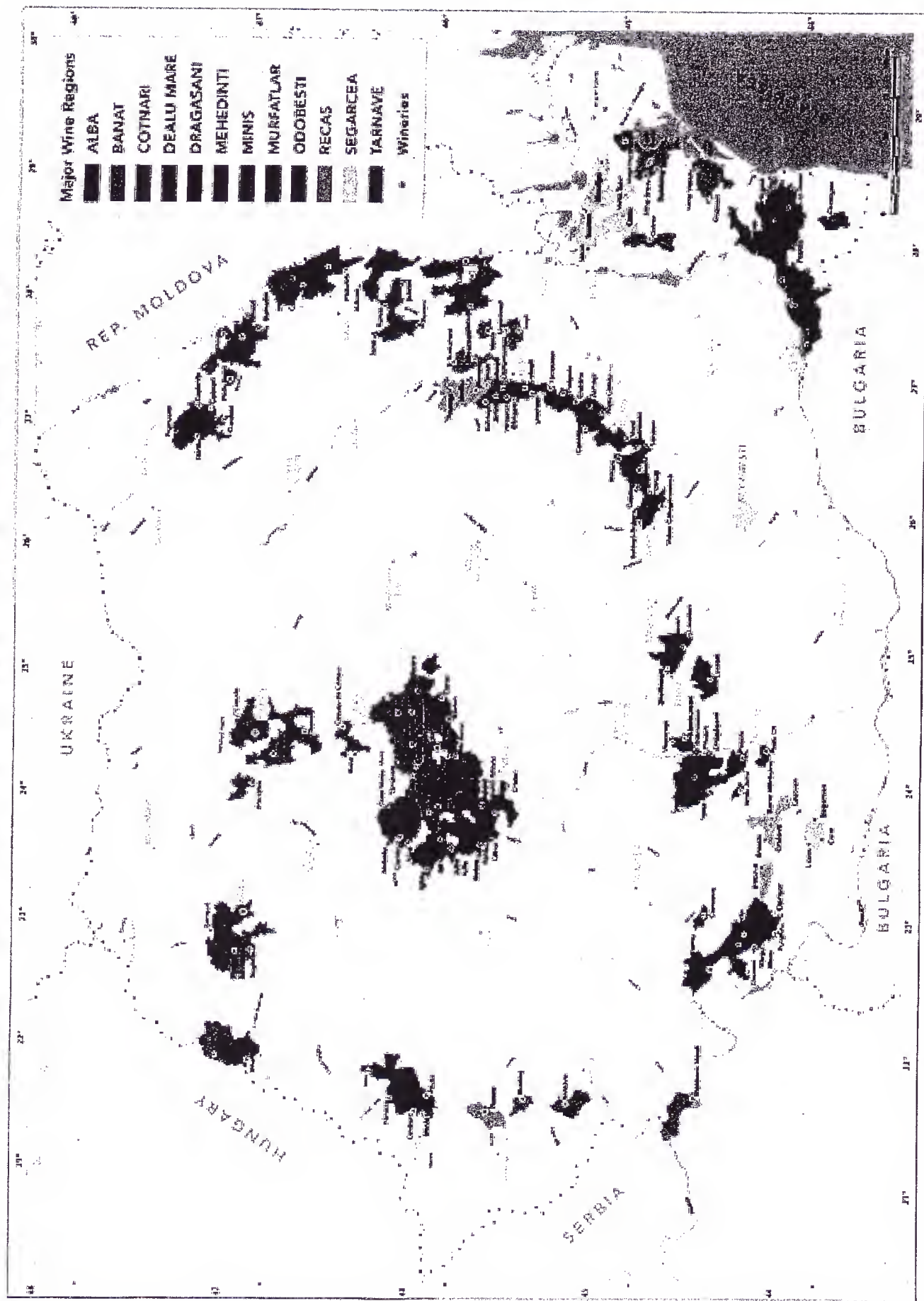
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Campaign financed with aid from the European Union and Romania





WINE MAP OF ROMANIA



The Romanian Wine Industry Outlook

Romania is a major European wine country and an important producer of world-class quality wines.

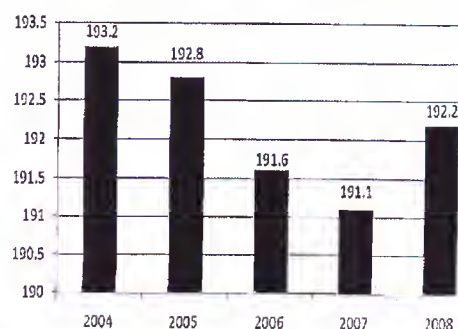
Place of Romania world-wide:

- area under vine (6th position in the EU)
- grape production (7th position in the EU)
- wine production (7th position in the EU)
- among the first 10 countries in the world with regard to area under vine and wine production.

The Vineyards

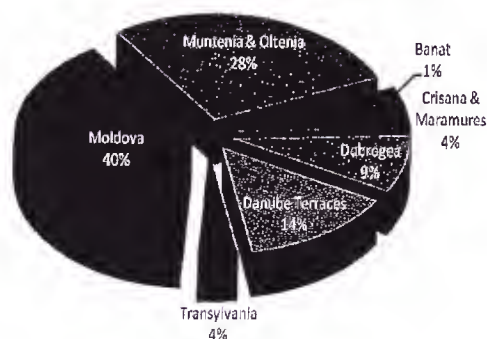
The total area under vine was 192,2 ha in 2008, in recovery as a result of a series of new plantations.

Area under vine, 2004-2008 ('000 ha)



By main wine regions, the distribution of areas under vine is illustrated in the following diagram:

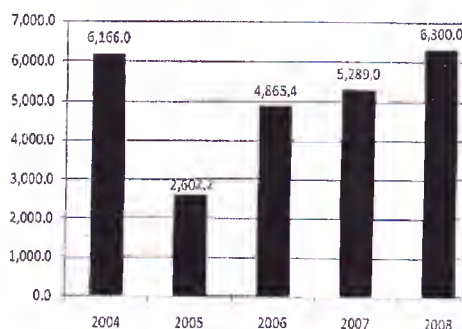
Area under vine, by main wine regions, 2008 (%)



Wine Production

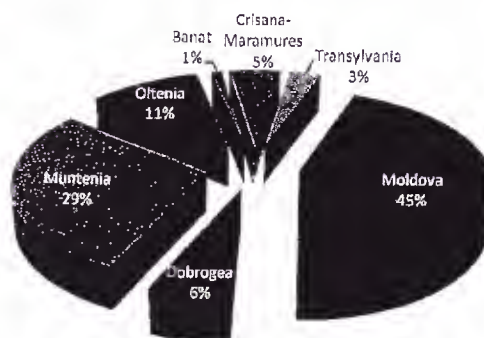
The evolution of wine production during the 2004-2008 period was the following:

Wine production, 2004-2008 ('000 hl)



By main regions, the wine production looked in 2008 as follows:

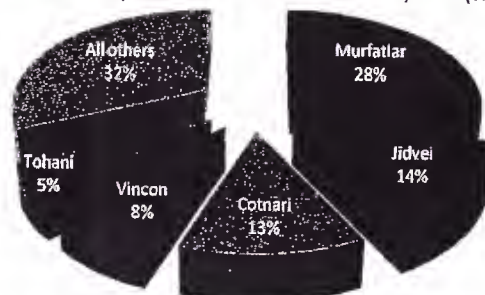
Wine production by main wine regions, 2008 (%)



Domestic Market

Currently, five big wine producers dominate the domestic market, with a common share of almost 70 % in 2008, the remainder being disputed by all other Romanian and foreign wine producers present on the market.

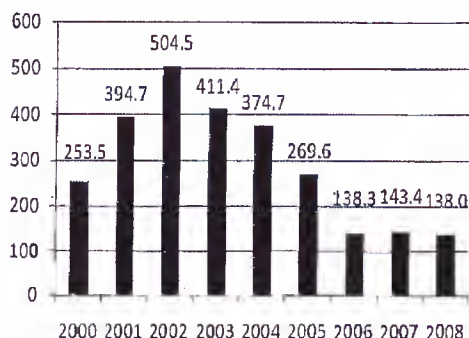
Main wine producers on the local market, 2008 (%)



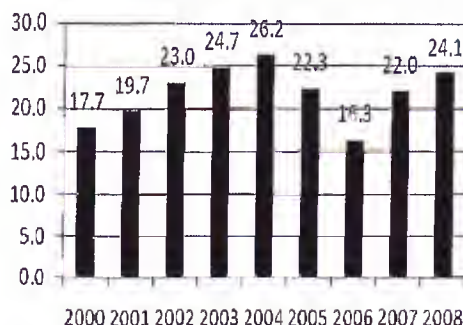
Wine Exports

In 2008, Romanian wine exports reached a level of 138 thousand hl, in value of 24.1 million US\$. Quantitatively, the exports remained stagnant, but value-wise they showed an increase which meant a growing average value (US\$/liter).

Romanian wine exports, 2000-2008 ('000 hl)

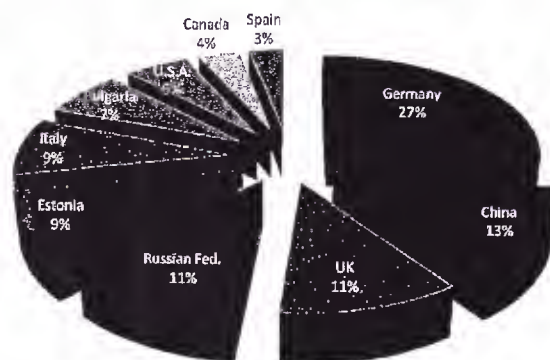


Romanian wine exports, 2000-2008 (mio US\$)



By main destinations, Romanian wine exports in 2008 presented as follows:

Romanian wine exports by main countries of destination, 2008 (%)



An interesting feature, worthwhile mentioning, is that Romania's Intra-EU wine trade held in 2008 a share of 74.4% in quantitative terms and of 65.4% in value terms, the difference being shared by over 33 third countries around the globe. At the same time, the top ten countries of destination held in 2008 a share of 88.3% in quantitative terms and of 85.1% in value terms.

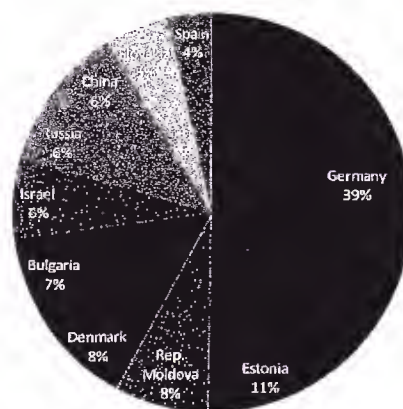
In 2009, the wine exports during the first five months presented as follows:

Romania: wine export Jan-May 2009

		(tons)	('000 €)
Total, of which:		5,340.9	5,589.6
Top 10 countries of destination		4,716.0	4,615.0
	%	88.3	82.6
1.	Germany	2,563.9	1,797.6
2.	Estonia	324.9	513.7
3.	Rep. Moldova	261.2	361.9
4.	Denmark	369.1	352.3
5.	Bulgaria	374.8	343.5
6.	Israel	150.1	297.0
7.	Russian Fed.	311.0	280.9
8.	China	146.5	256.5
9.	Slovakia	123.1	238.4
10.	Spain	91.4	173.2

Value-based hierarchy

Geographical Orientation Jan-May 2009 (%)

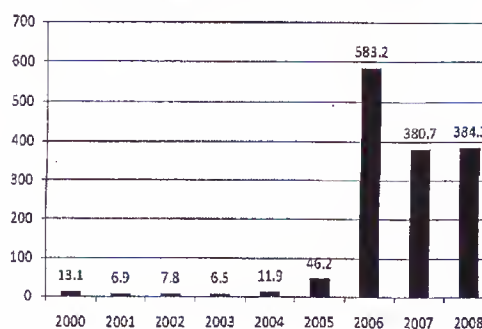


Wine Imports.

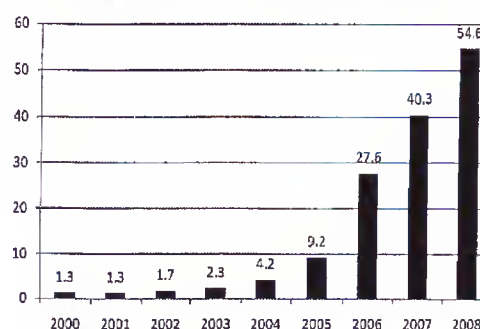
In 2008, Romanian wine imports reached a level of 384.3 thousand hl, in value of 54.6 million US\$, meaning a slight increase in quantity terms, while in value terms the growth was more pronounced. The explanation is rather simple, since the import in 2006 consisted mainly in cheap bulk wines imported to compensate the losses recorded in 2005, while beginning with 2007 the imports of bottled wines of higher quality became ever more manifest.

During the period 2000-2008 the wine imports evolution of Romania looked as follows:

Romanian wine imports, 2000-2008 ('000 hl)

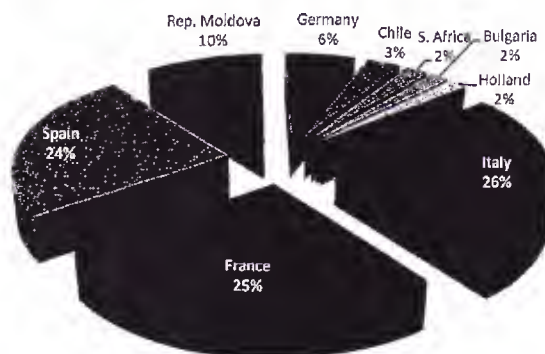


Romanian wine imports, 2000-2008 (mio US\$)



By main countries of origin, Romania's wine imports in 2008 are presented below:

Romania: wine imports by main countries of origin, 2008 (%)



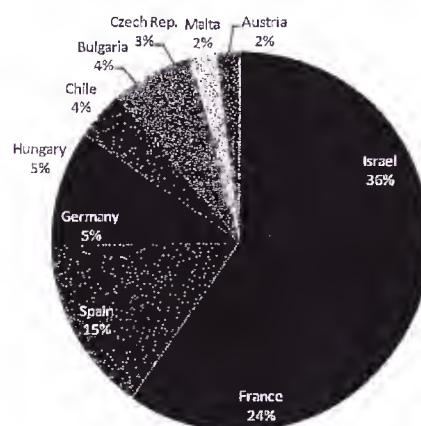
In 2009, the wine imports presented as follows:

Romania: wine imports Jan-May 2009

	(tons)	('000 €)
Total, of which:	4,756.0	5,456.1
Top ten countries of origin	3,893.1	4,235.2
	%	
1. Israel	1,369.0	1,522.0
2. France	270.8	998.2
3. Spain	1,237.6	647.1
4. Germany	57.0	219.4
5. Hungary	170.0	193.8
6. Chile	62.8	174.6
7. Bulgaria	459.1	169.1
8. Czech Rep.	85.0	130.1
9. Malta	7.5	91.2
10. Austria	174.3	89.7

Value-based hierarchy

Geographical Orientation Jan-May 2009 (%)



Source: APEV Romania, based on raw statistical data from MAPDR, CRPC and INS.

Legend: MAPDR Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development, INS The National Statistical Institute

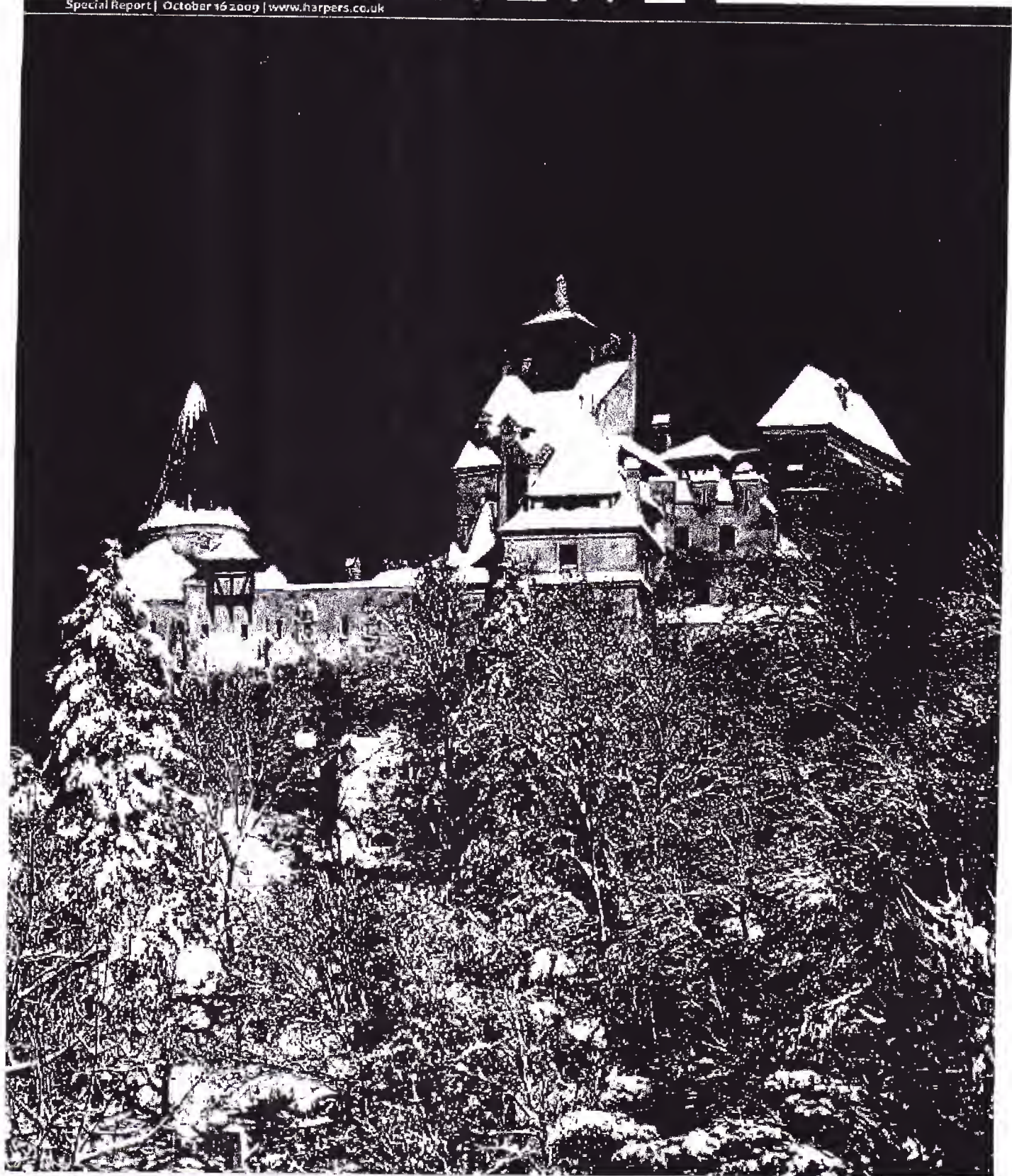
ROMANIA - WINE MAP

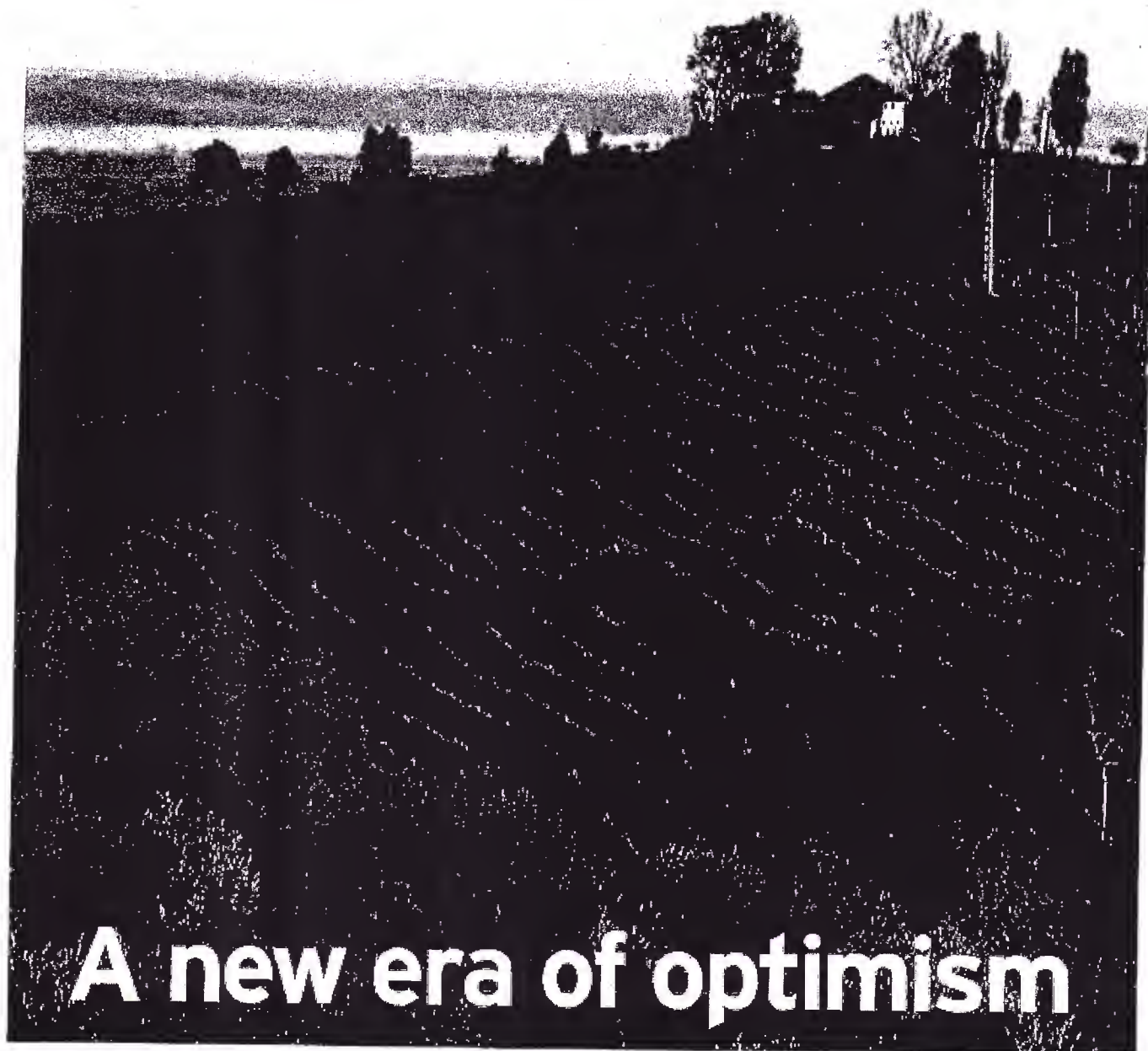
APEV ROMANIA



ROMANIA

Special Report | October 16 2009 | www.harpers.co.uk





A new era of optimism

Romania has emerged from communism and revolution with enthusiasm to restore its reputation as a major player in wine. Eamonn Houston finds a new confidence among its winemakers as they set their sights on the UK

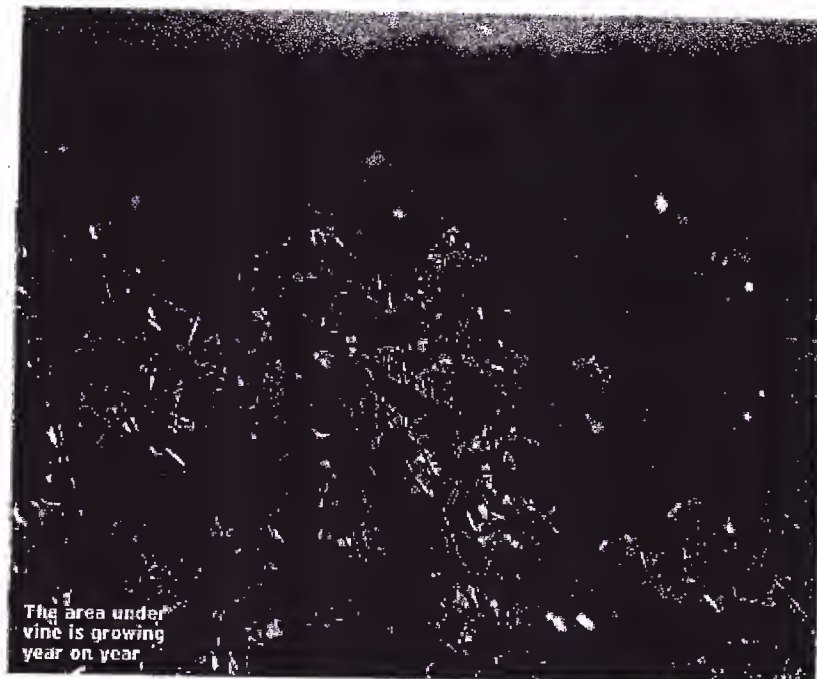
The last time I went to Romania for work reasons was in 2004. Its wines were just one of the many surprises of this hugely interesting central European country. I'd never really thought of Romania in terms of wine before, but a friend advised me to give them a go - and I was surprised.

Back then the country - still best known in the west as the home of the legend of Dracula and scene of the final and bloody out workings of the democratic movement against Eastern Bloc Communism in 1989 - was in a state of flux. I was told that much had changed since the early 1990s but there was still a long way to go.

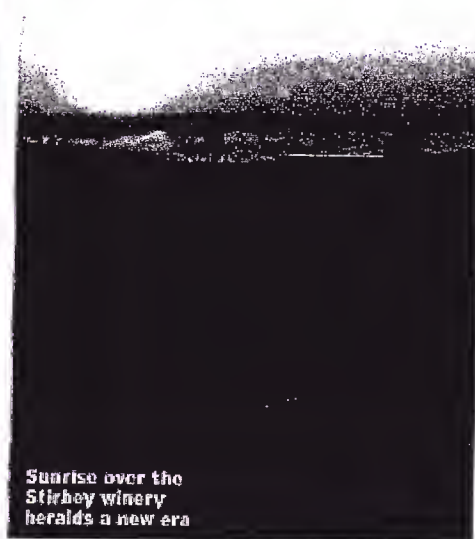
That was clear to see on the streets of the sprawling capital Bucharest, in which the opulent sat side by side with tenement monuments to abject poverty, and the crude featureless apartment blocks of the Communist Ceausescu era.

Five years on I have returned, specifically to tour the vineyards of what could rightly be ►

INTRODUCTION



The area under vine is growing year on year



Sunrise over the Stirbey winery heralds a new era

described as a sleeping giant in the wine world. Well, not so much sleeping, but awakening from a slumber, slowly but surely. Romania claims to be the sixth-largest producer of wine worldwide and has a large domestic market, and a rich history of winemaking. It is also beginning to see tangible benefits from accession to the European Union in 2007.

The task now in hand is for its winemakers to take their message outside the domestic arena. The problems for Romanian viticulture since the 1989 revolution have been manifold. But in 2009, Bucharest, the hub of everything that happens in Romania, has clearly cleaned up its act.

The same can be said of a wine industry pummelled by all the worst of the Communist industrial ethos.

Mass-produced wines, degrading vineyards and corruption all took their toll. Then there was the problem of land ownership as the country emerged from the ravages of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's 11-year regime.

Assembling enough parcels of land – which were nationalised under the regime – to constitute a viable vineyard was a laborious task. Some 180,000ha of vineyard was freed up to hand back to owners – strips of land could have up to 80 people claiming ownership. So,

revitalising the wine industry was no mean feat for a handful of individuals and companies determined to restore Romania's reputation on the world wine stage.

Fresh Investment

The wineries are beginning to reap the rewards of fresh investment and the commitment of its winegrowers. Gradually, Romanian wine professionals are being lured back to the homeland.

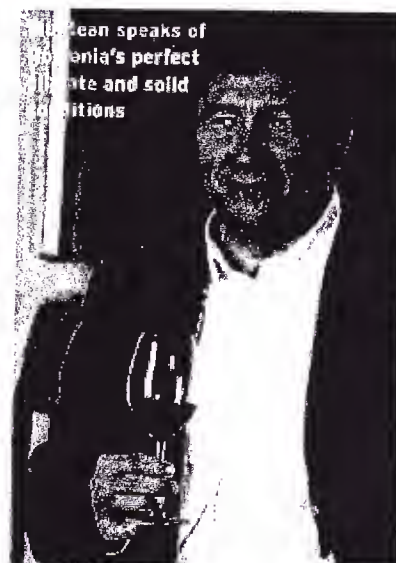
Many have studied viticulture and worked in vineyards in France and Italy. As a result, Romania's wine industry has a new-



Iliescu Krizan family vineyard dates back to 17th century



Philip Cox predicts a great future for Romanian wine



Iliescu speaks of Romania's perfect climate and solid traditions



found swagger. A revolution is taking place.

The wineries of 2009 combine state-of-the-art practices with homage to the country's rich winemaking heritage.

According to Viorel Stoian, professor of viticulture at the University of Craiova: "Romania numbers among the few countries in the world that benefit from such favourable conditions for vine growing and winemaking, except, perhaps, France, which can produce a great variety of wines."

Illustrative of the new impetus is the sprawling and regally impressive Domeniul Coroanei estate at Segarcea, on the outskirts of the western city of Craiova. From the slopes of the vineyard you can see Serbia and Montenegro on the horizon.

The winery was formally owned by the Romanian royal family and first king of the country Carol I. It is now in the hands of husband-and-wife team, Mihai and Cornelia Anghel, established Romanian business people who have invested €25 million in restoring an estate that has 270ha under vine.

Cornelia, a former cardiologist, is responsible for the winemaking and Domeniul Coroanei has set its sights on the premium end of the market.

Mihai began replanting the huge vineyard

in 2005. The wines are already showing signs of potential for high quality with Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petasca Neagra – the signature grapes for the red portfolio. Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris and Petasca Alba make up the white complement.

"With a correct approach and professional marketing and packaging, Romanian wines will surprise the UK consumer – namely that Romania produces high-quality wines that deserve to be tasted," she says.

Future in the UK

The momentum towards expanding Romania's footprint in the wine world has accelerated. A new generic group, Romanian Winegrowers, is bringing the message from the country's vineyards to the UK market. A UK office will oversee its promotional activity.

Perhaps no one in Romania knows the nuances of the UK market better than Bristol-born Philip Cox, co-owner of the Cramele Recas winery on the outskirts of Timisoara in the Banat region.

Cox has wines listed with independent Scottish-based wine distributor Alliance Wines and is one of the most vocal exponents of the country's new-found potential.

"I think we are living in exciting times and there is a great future for Romanian wine," he says. "It has always been a large wine-producing country, with a diverse and high-quality set of vineyard regions, with great natural potential and great heritage.

"Now with all the new development projects

going on, I am sure a lot of exciting and surprising wines will be made which, thanks to the strategic position close to the heart of the European Union (one of the world's biggest wine markets), will start to be a commercial force."

Recas has more than 400ha under vine in the area and has a large emphasis on wine tourism with space for conferences, weddings and other events on-site.

Now Romanian wines stand poised before the world wine stage and they have caught the eye of many in the industry.

After an evening of sampling the delights of Bucharest with its eclectic architecture, meaty Romanian dishes accompanied by indigenous wine and beer, host Dan Munteanu, managing director of Hallowed International, takes us on a journey to Dealu Mare, one of Romania's best-known winemaking regions and an area renowned for the quality of its reds.

Driving eastwards along the wide avenues of the outskirts of Bucharest, the landscape shifts gently to a rural Romania that retains all the agricultural trappings of hundreds of years ago – horses and carts included.

Biggest exports

Hallowed Romania is the largest exporter of the country's wines.

Although an importer of Romanian wines prior to the overthrow of the Ceausescus, the company capitalised on opportunities offered by the greater freedom of being involved with the first joint venture in the wine industry – formed between Romanian and western ►

We are living in exciting times and there is a great future for Romanian wine.

INTRODUCTION



The impressive Domenicul Coroanei winery



Harvest time in Dealu Mare

companies and private individuals (Vinesport Trading Company).

Since that development Halewood has expanded its interests through the majority ownership of Halewood Romania, a company founded in Bucharest in 1997.

Halewood forms an integral part of the new alliance of the country's wineries, aimed at raising the profile of the country's wines in the coveted UK market.

Muntean is confident that the new generic group will give the country a stronger, more united voice.

"I am delighted that together with the most prestigious winemaking companies in Romania, we have finally agreed to create an agency that will represent Romania's wines in the UK," he says.

"We needed a voice to make the wines of this land better known to the UK trade and consumer. We have lots to offer from a land of exceptional beauty and diversity. Things have moved on and it is time to talk about our achievements.

"Romania has so much to offer as a wine

country – perfect climate and soil conditions, great diversity, exciting local grape varieties, exceptional terroirs, an influx of new investors committed to quality and innovation, and a long and rich wine and food culture.

"There is a determination to develop the infrastructure and generate more tourism – we are seeing more and more new visitors come to the country," adds Muntean. "We now need to express our true potential."

Muntean's enthusiasm is reflected by the winery. Halewood Romania's vineyard dominates the slopes of a large area of Dealu Mare. The grape varieties are diverse, ranging from Romania's signature Feteasca Neagra and Feteasca Alba to Pinot Noir grown on the flat land beneath.

The native grapes of Romania are gradually enjoying a renaissance as the varieties produce wines of rising quality. Grapes such as the red Feteasca Neagra and white Tamaioasa Romaneasca are regarded as being both distinctively Romanian and capable of high quality.

In terms of its viticulture, Romania is almost at the northern limit of wine growing, meaning the majority of its vineyards can be found on hills with well-drained slopes and good sun exposure.

The Prince Stirbey winery in the Dragasani area is another that draws on the country's 4,000-year-old winemaking heritage.

Like Domenicul Coroanei, the focus is on the higher end of the market and Stirbey's 2007

Sauvignon Blanc is served on German airline Lufthansa's first-class passenger wine list.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when after a phylloxera outbreak, most of the country's vineyards had to be replanted, Prince Barbu Alexandru Stirbey was owner of the largest vine nursery in the country. Its research focused on furthering indigenous grape varieties, which had almost been displaced by foreign grape varieties.

In 1946 his daughter, Princess Maria Stirbey, inherited the vineyards in Dragasani, which have been in family ownership since the 17th century. After the Communist expropriation in 1949, its operations were carried on as a national wine-producing industry.

In 2001, the vineyards were restored to heirs by the state, Baroness Heana Kripp, granddaughter of Princess Maria Stirbey, has devoted her efforts to the revival of the traditional family property ever since. And at her side is husband Jacob Kripp.

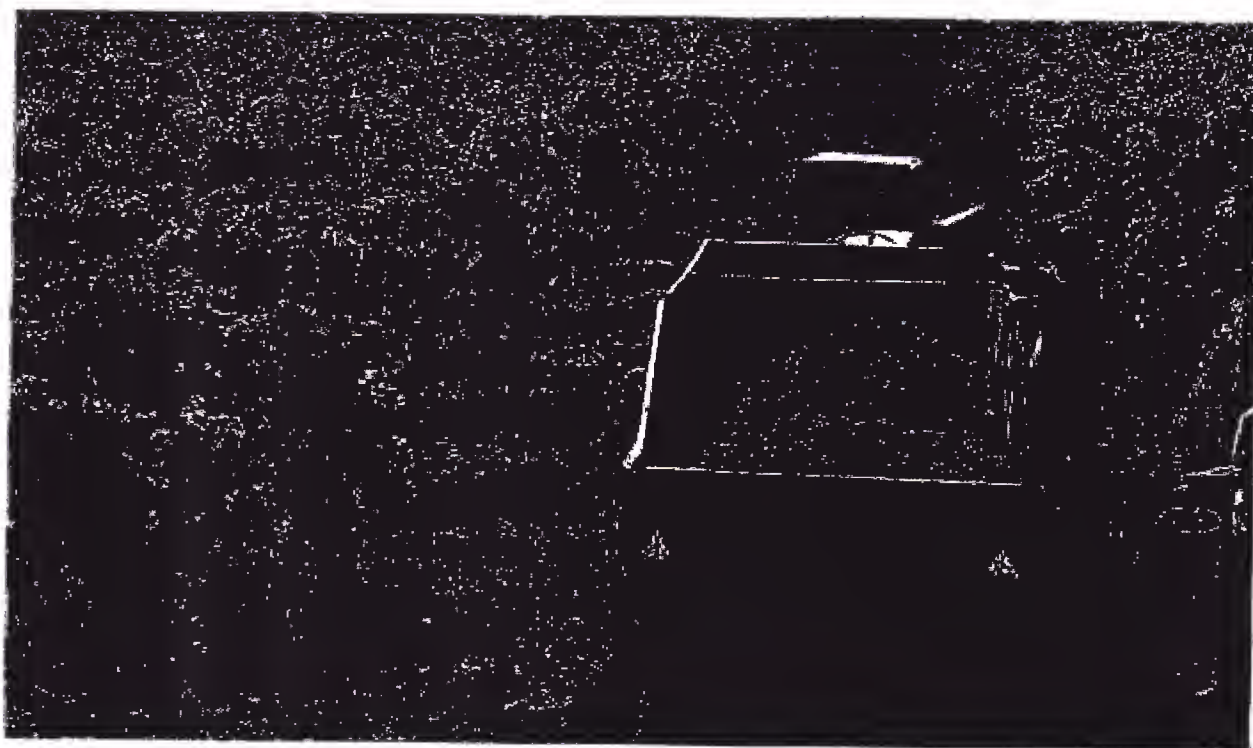
The Agricola Stirbey Wine Estate today consists of vineyards of the same size as before Communist nationalisation in 1949, with 30ha under vine.

Artisanal wines

Kripp says the appeal of Romanian wine lies in its variety and difference. "What we are producing in Romania is quite different from 99% of the rest, focusing on a completely different segment of the UK market.

"For our wines – artisanal, natural wines

“Now is the time to start talking about Romania – there have been so many positives over the past few years”



of local Romanian grape varieties, mainly – we see good chances of finding interest in a niche of wine enthusiasts who, in principle, are always curious to discover new regions or new grapes, and who are keen to unvell these to their friends.

“For them, we can offer really new discoveries of unique character and high potential, backed by a true family history, representing excellent value for money, offering a price level of £8-£16 end-consumer price, for the same quality as famous French or Italian brands of £20-£30 per bottle.”

In 2007 Romanian exports to the UK represented 5,328hl, accounting for revenue worth €799 million.

The UK stands at number six on the table of export markets, with Germany and the Russian Federation taking the top two spots.

Meanwhile, Vinarte, another relatively young vineyard, has grown through a series of investments and the advice of Italian and Spanish winemaking experts. It now has more than 380ha spread across Dealu Mare (132ha) and 250ha in the south west of the country in Samburesti and Vanju Mare.

Rodica Protescu, general manager at Vinarte, says the company is hoping to capitalise on a UK market coming out of recession: “The recession has had an impact on our exports to the UK, so we are really hoping that the market recovers and allows us to increase our exports,” he says.

“We are really confident in the quality of our

wines and hope this is also recognised in the UK. The future will also involve a major focus on raising our profile, and that of Romanian winegrowers, throughout the UK.”

So far, the export picture for Romania in 2009 is healthy, outstripping imports for the first time since 2000.

In the first quarter exports reached a value of €3.4 million according to a recently issued report from the National Vine and Wine Employers' Association.

But the value of exports plummeted by 17% when compared to the same period last year.

Other Romanian wineries setting their sights on the UK market are Domenii Sahatani, Serve and Senator. It is a tough one to crack, with many emerging countries queuing up for a piece of the action.

Giles Cooke MW, of Scotland-based independent distributor Alliance Wines, is not totally convinced about the prospects.

“We work with Cramble Recas and have three wines – Pinot Grigio, Pinot Noir and Merlot rosé. All are pitched at around £5.99 to the independent retail and on-trade sectors,” he says.

“They all sell reasonably well but there is little real demand for Romanian wines as such and it is more about the varieties, pricing and offering something a little different.

Initially, the Pinot Grigio offered a useful and cheaper alternative to Italian Pinot Grigio but, as prices have fallen in Italy, this is no longer the case. It will be interesting to see whether sales hold up.”

However, the mood among the Romanians is upbeat. Strengthened by years of replanting and piecing together the post-Communist patchwork of vine land – and conscious of the massive strides that have been made in improving the wineries – they approach the task ahead with confidence and enthusiasm.

“Now is the time to start talking about Romania – there have been so many positives over the past few years, so many changes,” says Paul Evans, director of Rumplus Communications, which will handle the Romanian marketing in the UK.

“We need to bring these to light. It will be an ongoing process but we aim to help with marketing issues, benchmarking and communication, as well as bringing in the right experts to help steer the ambition of this group of companies.”

David Lockley, chief oenologist at the Senator winery, again says that Romania's difference is its biggest strength.

“Romanian varieties are totally different to what the UK is buying and people will immediately shy away from Romanian grape varieties on-shelf,” he warns. “We must introduce our varieties gradually by means of a blend – Cabernet Sauvignon and Feteasca Neagra, for example.

“In order to promote brand Romania we must act as a group, as we are doing with Romanian Winegrowers, as opposed to individuals.

“The latter will not work.” ■

Romania by numbers

An at-a-glance guide to Romania's wine scene

250%

Italian percentage of imports to Romania

27%

of Romanian wine exported to Germany

7th

Romania is the seventh largest producer of grapes in the world

Source for statistics: APCE Romania

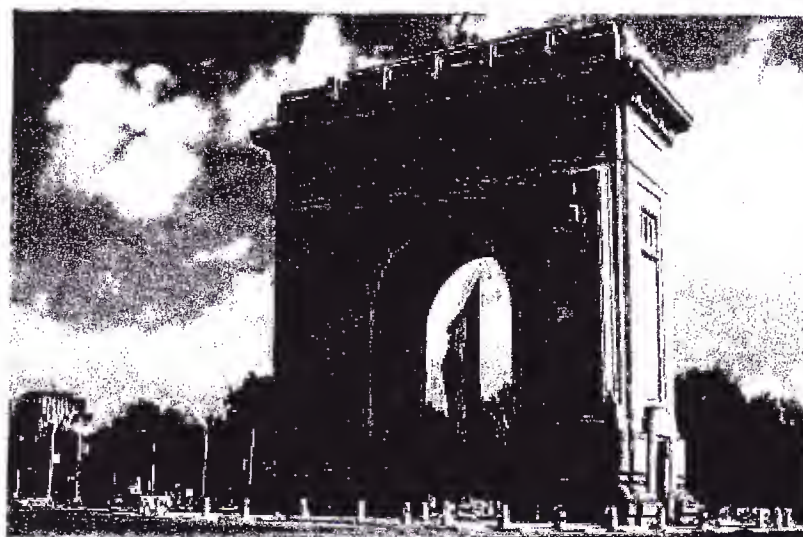


Image: Shutterstock

6th

the world rank of Romania as a wine producer

138,000

litres of wine exported from Romania in 2008

£15.3m

the value of Romanian exports

Top 10 Romanian export markets 2008

- Germany
- China
- UK
- Russian Federation
- Estonia
- Italy
- Bulgaria
- USA
- Canada
- Spain

192.2

thousand of hectares under vine in Romania

6,300,000

total wine production in 2008

FAO
EU
Wine
2008
1500
litres



The key varieties

Romania has unique varieties that are turning heads in the wine world

Feteasca Alba

Known as White Maiden, this is an old Romanian variety, grown primarily in Moldova and Transylvania. Wines are either dry or semi-dry, typically with a balanced alcohol content (11.5%-12%). They tend to have an acidity and sugar content, and feature a velvety, natural finesse. It is the most popular Romanian variety, with more than 23,000ha planted. It is found in almost all regions, especially in Transylvania and Moldova. The best Feteasca Alba wines are in Transylvania, but in good years, the Cotnari district produces sweet and semi-sweet wines.

Feteasca Regala

Romanian for the Royal Maiden, this is an old variety from Transylvania. The wines are dry, fresh, have high acidity and a distinguished flavour.

Italian Riesling

The grape has been introduced in Romania before the phylloxera invasion. It occupies 20,000ha, mostly in Transylvania, Moldova, Muntenia and Oltenia. Produces well-balanced wines which tend to have a good evolution in time if kept in bottle.

Grasa de Cotnari

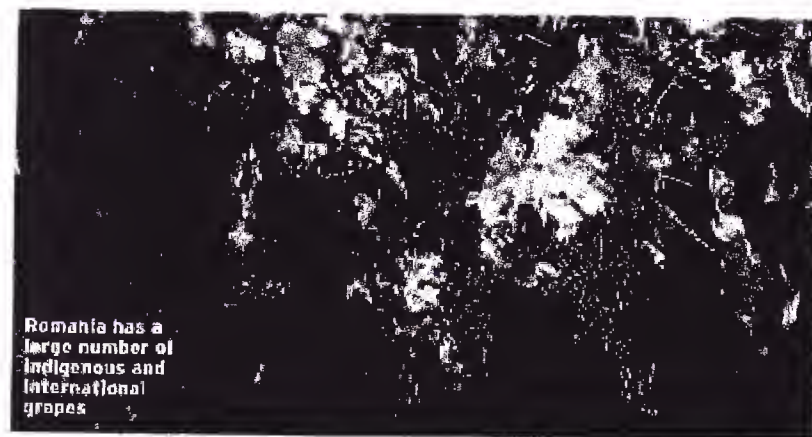
Belongs to the old Cotnari vineyard and has been grown for more than seven centuries. It is picked when the grapes shrivel and is affected by Botrytis Cinerea (noble rot). Its sugar content is high - more than 240g per litre - and it has a strong fragrance. This variety has a common origin with Furmint.

Sauvignon Blanc

Introduced in the post-phylloxera period, Sauvignon Blanc holds an important place in Romania, more than 6,000ha planted. It is mainly cultivated in Transylvania, Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea. It produces dry or semi-dry wines. The Murfatlar winery from the Dobrogea region also produces some remarkable wines from this variety. Producers in the Dealu Mare region that are worth noting are Domeniile Sahuteni and Senator.

Pinot Gris

Introduced in Romania after the phylloxera period, this is cultivated on 3,200ha, mainly



in Murfatlar, Dealu Mare and Transylvanian vineyards (Tarnave, Alba and Alud). Pinot Gris accumulates large quantities of sugar in the period of maturation. The wines produced are dry, semi-dry or semi-sweet, full, robust, well balanced and capable of valuable vintages. Murfatlar produces excellent sweet Pinot Gris wines.

Cabernet Sauvignon

Variety with French origins, this was also introduced post-phylloxera. It is cultivated on more than 11,500ha in the southern part of the country (Dobrogea, Muntenia and Oltenia). Cabernet Sauvignon wines produced in Romania have an impressive quality and acquire excellent characteristics with ageing.

Pinot Noir

It is mainly cultivated in the same warmer regions as Cabernet Sauvignon (Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea) and it produces fruity, easy-to-drink wines.

Merlot

Together with Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, Merlot is cultivated in the south (Muntenia, Oltenia, Dobrogea and south of Moldova). It is dry and the bouquet evolves.

Feteasca Neagra

Grown in several areas in Moldova and Muntenia, the Black Maiden is in an old native variety. These grapes produce dry, semi-dry or sweet wines, that have an abv of 12%-12.5% and have a deep red colour, with ruby shades.

Feteasca Neagra wines are obtained in Valea Calugareasca, Urleti, Tohani and Cotesti districts. They have a blackcurrant flavour, that becomes richer and smoother with ageing.

Babesca Neagra

Is an old native variety cultivated mostly in the south of Moldova. Usually the Babesca Neagra wines are made for current consumption. However, some very high-quality wines are made in the Nicoresti district of Moldova. A winery making excellent Babesca Neagra wine is Senator from Moldova Region, Odobesti.

Muscat Ottonel

Of French origin, this is cultivated on 8,000ha. Very good wines are obtained in Transylvania where the cold climate favours the conservation of stronger aromas.

Busuioaca de Bohotin

This is grown in a tiny area of the Moldova region. The wine has a rusty golden colour, distinct from any other wine. Its flavour is original, resembling honeysuckle and ripe juicy peaches, with a perfect harmony of sugar, alcohol and acidity.

Some other cultivated grapes are:

Traminer rosé, Francusa, Aligote, Furmint, Galbena de Odobesti, Zghihara de Husi, Plavie, Mustoasa de Maderat, Iordana, Creato, Majarca Alba, Steinschiller rosé, Rkatsiteli, Saint Emilion, Sarba, Crainposie selecta, Columba, Aromat de Iasi, Ozana, Alidori, Donaris, Furmint de Minis and Sangiovese. ■